



Speech delivered by the Prime Minister of Aruba
mr. Henny Eman
on the occasion of the beginning of the
construction of the Marriott Ocean Club
Aruba, April 9, 1997

Honorable members of Parliament;
Fellow colleagues of the Council of Ministers;
Mr. Steve Weisz, President of the Marriott Vacation Club International;
Mr. Scot Ringer, General Manager of the Aruba Marriott Resort & Casino;
Members of the management team of the Marriott vacation Club International
Ladies and Gentlemen.

It seldom happens that for a second time within a period of ten years, the construction of the same building is started in a ceremonial way. This time we will try to stay around and guide the project to the end. I wish to thank first of all mr. Steve Weisz and mr. Scott Ringer of the Marriott International Inc. for choosing to further tie the operations of the Marriott corporation, to the future development of Aruba. We are happy with the confidence you show in Aruba and thank you for that.

Also I want to thank my colleague, minister Tico Croes and his team of young enterprising men and women, on this great achievement. The start of this new hospitality complex, puts an end to an era in the history of Aruba, which we are most eager to close, but must never forget.

Finishing this building as a time-sharing project reminds us of our own businessmen laying the sound foundation for our tourist industry through the timesharing operations. Mister Raymond Maduro of the Sun Development, here present with us tonight, must feel great satisfaction in seeing what positive results his ideas of many years ago, have had for the economic development of Aruba.

Ladies and gentlemen, it's over. But never more should any generation have to experience what caused the delay of a complete decade in the completion of a well planned economic recovery from the worse crisis this country has ever been put through. We lost too much time, too much energy and resources. We paid too high a price in terms of international reputation, simply because of internal political envy and distrust. This should never repeat itself.

I am sure that everyone has some understanding of the importance of the construction that is about to start. It is of course the welcome addition of a quality resort to our already prestigious tourism industry. For the people of Aruba however, who have lived through the economic downfall, the crisis with it's high unemployment and the years of reconstruction and new hopes for a better future, the construction of this building means more than just that of a beautiful new resort.

It is the transformation of a ruin into a beautiful resort on one of the most beautiful beaches in the world. It is the physical and psychological end of a very difficult period in the history of Aruba. It symbolizes governance for progress of a country and its people; one of going the extra mile; of making every possible effort to assure that every dime is well invested; to assure that every enterprise is made productive and that no situation, however deplorable or desperate, is not left aside without a strong effort to change it into a hopeful one.

It is through this never resting effort that we have put an end to this era and have started assuring every citizen his or her share in the progress of Aruba. While at the same time opening new and diverse opportunities to both local and foreign entrepreneurs for very promising economic and social developments.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is through this spirit of change that we created progress and more than ten thousand new career opportunities for our people, like FREDDY DONATA, a distinguished waiter of the Sonesta Hotel at the Seaport Village; like VIOLETA FRANS, the well known F&B Cashier Supervisor at the Holiday Inn; like ELVIRA ZIEVINGER of the housekeeping department of the Divi & Tamarij Hotel; like CARLOS JACOBS, the successful sales representative at the Costa Linda Resort; like SHIRLEY DILLINGEN, supervisor in the housekeeping department of the Marriott Aruba Resort; like MORAIMA GEERMAN, executive secretary at the Bushiri Beach Hotel and like FRANKLIN WINTERDAAL 'sous chef' at the Hyatt Regency Resort.

These and many other men and women found a new and promising career in the new tourism industry that has already become a model in the region. And there is good reason for us to be seen as such. The belief in creating a modern, quality driven tourism industry, has made it possible for Aruba to be considered one of the top best vacation destinations in the world; for this industry to generate an economic growth that has put Aruba at the top of the countries for its income per capita in the region and for its level of distribution of this wealth. It is the belief in ones abilities that has made it possible to balance economic growth with sound social welfare and environmental protection that is becoming a showcase to the world.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are proud of what we have achieved. And we have all the reason in the world to be proud. We have transformed what once was called by Spanish pirates, the "useless island" into a dynamic oasis in the Caribbean. We have not given up on our dreams of a better future for all and we will not. We have not allowed for negative and destructive forces from within or from outside, to refrain us from making the best of our lives and of the community we share. No matter how long they have tried nor how strong they have been. Let this achievement we have made together and the 'beginning of the end' of this era with the completion of this new resort, be an inspiration for us all.

I congratulate the Marriott International, the Marriott Vacation Club International and the People of Aruba on the new milestone in our common future.

I thank you.